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SUBJECT: TAJIKISTAN STRENGTHENS ANTI-TIP EFFORTS WITH U.S. ASSISTANCE

1. SUMMARY: Tajikistan has made significant progress on combating trafficking-in-persons (TIP) violations, but efforts remain hindered by lack of extradition agreements, ineffective coordination, and deep-rooted social issues. The government and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) -the leading the NGO in Tajikistan on TIP issues-drafted a national plan to combat TIP through 2010. The Ministry for Internal Affairs (MOI) hopes to increase TIP staff and shift its focus to trafficking for slavery purposes; and the IOM has plans to create a coordination center and build a new shelter for TIP victims, all through the help of U.S. funds. END SUMMARY.

2. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MOI), the government of Tajikistan launched 81 TIP cases in 2005 and convicted 58 people of trafficking-related crimes-a drastic increase from the 29 convictions in 2004. The three government agencies dealing with TIP: the General Prosecutor's Office, the Ministry of Security and MOI. All provide differing statistics but every agency's numbers show investigations, criminal charges and convictions have increased and indicate the Tajik government is serious in combating TIP. In a meeting with PolOff January 4, Djurakulov attributed progress against TIP to President Rahmonov's leadership encouraging attention to TIP.

#### EXPECTED CHANGES IN 2006

3. The Tajik government understands the importance the United States places on combating international TIP and works to further institutional changes in 2006, which will ensure long-term progress. One of Djurakulov's goals for 2006 is to strengthen contacts and cooperation with local law enforcement and high-level government officials in receiving countries such as the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.), Iran, and Turkey. Tajikistan is working to draft bilateral extradition agreements. A lack of extradition agreements has prevented the Tajik authorities from detaining abroad known Tajik criminals and suspects who use other countries as a safe haven.

4. A working group of senior officials drafted the National Government Action Plan on People Trafficking for 2006-2010 with IOM input. A national strategy will focus resources-presently a special commission on TIP and three disjointed government agencies work separately on TIP issues. Currently under consideration, the plan includes measures to strengthen legislation to international standards and improves support for victim rehabilitation. IOM officials complained to PolOff during a meeting December 28 the TIP legislation needs to be more stringent. The law as it stands has many loopholes and is ineffective in prosecuting criminals. Although traffickers have been arrested and imprisoned, they are not convicted under the Law on Combating Trafficking passed in 2004, but rather of other crimes such as "recruitment for exploitation".

5. The MOI has requested funds to establish special TIP sections and increase staff in every regional and district office. Djurakulov plans to shift the department's focus to TIP for slavery purposes, including child slavery-a problem that has gone under the radar screen. Thus far, combating TIP efforts have focused on women trafficked for prostitution. In Tajikistan the huge stigma against victims force many to stay quiet about crimes against them, and victims do not trust law enforcement authorities to protect them. The MOI continues to step up its efforts to educate the public about the government's commitment to combating TIP and ensuring victims' safety.

#### ASSISTANCE FROM THE UNITED STATES

6. The MOI relies on the United States to fund its TIP programs. Post's Senior Law Enforcement Advisor (SLEA) has worked closely with INL to secure over \$600,000 in organized crime fighting equipment for the Tajik government, which will be dispensed early 2006. In addition, INL has granted over \$1.3

million to IOM to build a permanent shelter in Dushanbe and border checkpoint (location to be determined), provide legal assistance and education. IOM is seeking funding to build a TIP Analysis and Coordination Center in Dushanbe to enhance cooperation and provide legal assistance.

7. The MOI and IOM have signed a Memorandum of Cooperation on

the Sphere of Combating Trafficking in Persons, but both sides agree the relationship needs to improve. Although grateful for IOM's assistance, in the meeting with PolOff, Djurakulov did not appear enthusiastic about IOM's programs and questioned the effectiveness of IOM's proposed center and shelters. He also commented that the equipment IOM has given the MOI such as radios and video cameras are not the most comprehensive tools for combating TIP. Post's SLEA noted that IOM received funds to implement the shelter one year ago, however IOM has failed to build the shelter because of their own foot-dragging.

#### EASE OF TRAFFICKING IN CENTRAL ASIA CREATES DEMAND

18. The General Prosecutor of the northern Sughd region-where 60% of TIP victims originate-linked TIP with funding international terrorist networks. The Tajik government has given great credence to the MOI to fight TIP because of the social and national security ramifications. Criminal organizations increasingly target Central Asia for its weak border and migration regulations and ready supply of vulnerable people. Poverty, lack of education and high unemployment rates leave many young women and children susceptible to traffickers' false promises of work and money. In 2005, the General Prosecutor's office registered 230 TIP cases, but the number of trafficked persons is much higher. The demand from countries such as the U.A.E. or Turkey means a trafficker can earn up to \$13,000 per person.

19. Djurakulov admitted corrupt officials assist criminals in human trafficking and he favors tighter travel and passport legislation. In October 2005 officials investigated 18 employees of the Tajik Passport Department for their involvement with TIP organized crime rings. The most popular trafficking route is by road to Osh, Kyrgyzstan and then onto the points east. Because Tajiks do not need foreign passports to travel to Kyrgyzstan, many smugglers and victims easily slip across the border.

110. COMMENT: The pervasiveness of TIP violations shows that combating efforts also need to focus on reducing the supply and should include programs to improve education, reduce poverty, fight corruption and advance gender equality.

111. COMMENT CONT'D: In 2004, a special high level commission was established to coordinate government and international NGOs' efforts on combating TIP, but work needs to be consolidated so it is not duplicated and scarce resources are used most effectively. The National Government Action Plan on Peoples Trafficking for 2006-2010, if approved, will help to coordinate efforts amongst all parties, raise public awareness and strengthen legislation. Post will also work to facilitate improved relations and coordination between the MOI and IOM to ensure the best use of U.S. funding. Given the international nature of TIP, Tajikistan is taking the right step in trying to push for TIP related extradition agreements. More cooperation, particularly on controlling the northern border, is needed. END COMMENT.

ARMBRUSTER

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